

Monitoring Conducted

Miles Of National Forest System Roads

Background

The Superior National Forest (SNF) maintains a comprehensive Road Atlas that provides an inventory of all known roads on the Forest. The Road Atlas includes Infrastructure Travel Routes (INFRA), an electronic database that has tabular data such as location, length, surface type, Objective (or, intended) Maintenance Level (OML), and maintenance needs. INFRA is complemented by and linked to the GIS Roads Layer, an electronic spatial inventory or map that shows the location of classified and unclassified roads.

Roads on the SNF are categorized in the Road Atlas as either “classified” or “unclassified”. Classified roads are those roads wholly or partially within the SNF that are determined to be needed for long term motor vehicle access, including Forest, state, county, township and other roads authorized by the Forest Service. Unclassified roads are those roads that are not managed as part of the forest transportation system, such as unplanned roads or temporary roads that were not properly “decommissioned” – or, stabilized and returned to a more natural state. Temporary roads are roads that are authorized for short-term management purposes but are not needed long term, are not included in the road inventory and are decommissioned after use (See Revised Forest Plan FEIS Volume II page F-3 for complete road definitions) .

Miles of National Forest System Roads

In 2007 the SNF continued to update and improve the accuracy of our road inventory. This was done through field visits to collect data on known classified and unclassified roads to evaluate their condition. We also have discovered and entered into our Road Atlas, information on previously unknown and undocumented unclassified roads. The data from improved inventory were examined to monitor changes in road miles between 2004 and 2007. This enabled us to assess the degree to which Forest Plan implementation is meeting or moving toward Forest Plan objectives (or projections) for amount and maintenance level of National Forest system roads.

Miles of road decommissioning

We monitored the miles and location of decommissioned roads by reviewing updated road inventory maps, project decisions and road management contracts. This information allowed us to assess the degree to which Forest Plan objectives for decommissioned road miles and project effectiveness were met.

Transportation Summary Points

- ✱ OML 1 and 2 road mileage at the end of 2007 represents approximately 77% and 104% respectively of the Decade 1 mileage projections.
- ✱ Overall, the mileage of *National Forest System* roads is trending towards Decade 1 projections, with the exception of surpassing OML 2 mileage expectations.
- ✱ When road decommissioning projects approved in 2004 through 2007 NEPA decisions are fully implemented, a total of 125 miles of roads will have been decommissioned.

Evaluation and Conclusions

Table 1 shows the road mileage status on the SNF from the 2004 Forest Plan existing condition through 2007. Road mileage displayed for 2004 was derived from October 2002 INFRA database. The table also shows the expected mileage when all project decisions are implemented (“Accomplished & Planned from

2005-2007 Decisions.”). The “2014 projection” shows the miles predicted in the Forest Plan FEIS at the end of the first decade of implementation. We assess Forest Plan objectives for roads by comparing the data for these timeframes.

Table 1. Actual Road Mileage Status from Infrastructure Database (INFRA)							
Year	OML1	OML2	OML3	OML 4 & 5	Total System Roads	Unclassified	Total Roads***
2004*	883	867	248	408	2406	223	2629
2005	920	925	241	403	2489	238**	2727
2006	956	944	241	403	2544	299**	2843
2007	874	907	231	401	2413	289	2702
Accomplished & Planned from 2005-2007 Decisions.	971	944	231	401	2547	116	2663
2014 Projection	1132	867	248	408	2655	0	2655
*Road mileage displayed for 2004 was derived from October 2002 INFRA database. **Reflects additional roads discovered through enhanced project inventories ***Reflects revised unclassified.							

OML 3, 4, 5 Roads: Since 2004 the total miles of OML 3, 4 and 5 roads have decreased slightly which below what was projected for 2014. This condition is consistent with Forest Plan objectives to build few new OMLs 3, 4 or 5 and to maintain the system with the minimum needed to provide adequate access.

OML 1, 2 Roads: Since 2004 the miles of OML1 and 2 roads have increased. Existing and planned OML 1 road miles are consistent with Forest Plan projections. Existing and planned OML 2 road miles currently exceed the miles projected for 2014. This increase has been due to a number of factors including edits to errors in the database and assigning unclassified roads and OML 1 roads to OML 2 roads. No new OML 2 road construction was approved in 2007 decisions.

Unclassified roads: Unclassified road mileage shown in 2004 has been revised upward about 76 miles to reflect additional old roads being discovered through enhanced project inventories to support project analysis. This increase is not a result of new road construction. The Forest Plan objective is to have zero unclassified roads. We will strive to meet this objective by implementing Forest Plan direction to either add these roads to our system or to decommission them. When actual accomplishments and all approved decisions are implemented unclassified road mileage will be reduced about 107 miles or by 52% from 2004.

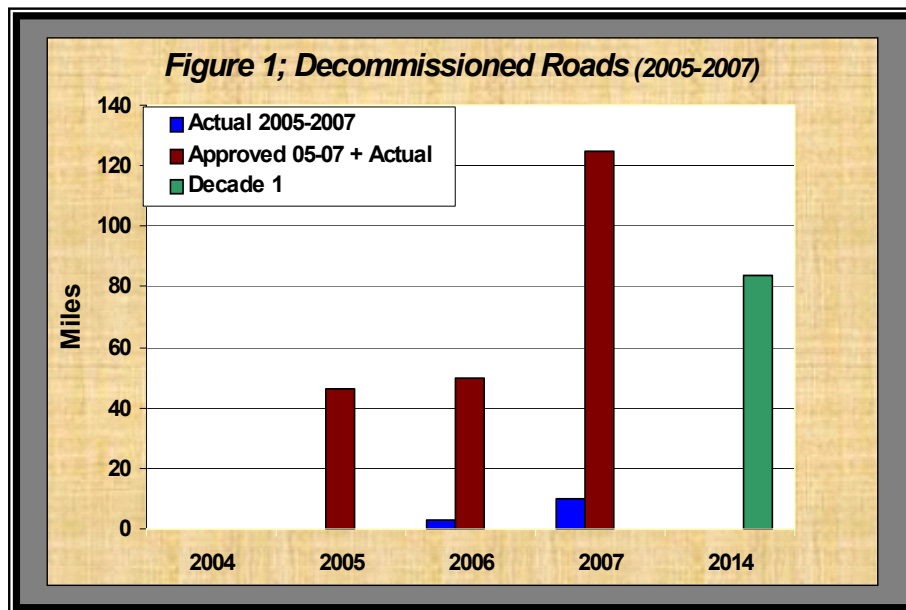
Following implementation of 2005-2007 approved project decisions the total road mileage will be similar to total miles known when the Revised Forest Plan was approved (See Table 1).

Road Decommissioning

During Fiscal Year 2007, ten miles of National Forest System road were decommissioned. In addition, approximately 62 miles of roads approved for decommissioning but not accomplished yet, were identified in four 2007 project decision documents. When these 2007 road projects in conjunction with 2005 and 2006 NEPA decisions are fully implemented, a total of 125 miles of roads will have been decommissioned. Table 2 outlines accomplished and future miles of roads to be

Table 2. Road Decommissioning (miles)			
Decision	Accomplished	Planned	Total
Forest Plan ROD (2004)			0
'04* & 05 Decisions			
Dunka Env Assessment	10 (2007)	20	30
Virginia EIS	3 (2006)	22	25
Tomahawk EIS		4.4	4.4
2006 Decisions			
Inga South Env Assessment		4.3	4.3
2007 Decisions			
Echo Trail		35	35
Whyte		24	24
Mid Temperence		1.2	1.2
Devils Trout		1.6	1.6
Sub Total Change	13	112	125
Decade 1 Projection (2014)			84

decommissioned by project decisions. Actual and planned decommissioned road miles represents 148% of the 84 miles projected by the end of Decade 1, 2014 in the Forest Plan. See Table 2 and Figure 1.



The intended outcome of decommissioning roads is to “make the road disappear to a casual viewer and to render it not drivable from the beginning of a road to the furthest point seen from a Forest system road or other public road” (Forest Plan Appendix F). A number of practices and techniques were implemented for decommissioning temporary roads, including removal of drainage structures and temporary bridges, removal of ruts and berms, reshaping and re-contouring, seeding and mulching, drainage control, and effective road blockage.



Photo 1. 2007. Nira Project. Rock placement at road entrance to prevent motorized travel



Photo 2. 2007. Nira Project. Rock placement and loosened soil along road to prevent motorized travel

Management Considerations

After reviewing monitoring findings, the SNF identified one management consideration.

- ✳ When 2004 through 2007 NEPA decisions are fully implemented, a total of 125 miles of roads will have been decommissioned. Consider the amount of road decommissioning that is occurring on the SNF and review Forest Plan direction for decommissioning roads (O-TS-8).